# AAC PARTNERS WITH ARMY LESSONS LEARNED CENTER

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## Introduction

The program manager (PM) was silent for a moment as he inquisitively looked at his staff. The PM Office had just been organized, and the PM was concluding his introductory remarks. The staff appeared eager and confident. Though some of them had not previously worked together, they appeared to be a cohesive team. The PM finally commented, "There's one more thing before I cut everyone loose to get on with the day's work. This is not the first PM shop challenged with developing a new product, and it won't be the last. I don't want to reinvent the wheel. This might be a new product, but I guarantee that we'll be using most of the same processes as other PM shops to meet our objective. I want to leverage the experiences and lessons learned from other offices. Let's avoid the minefields." Then, the PM turned to his Deputy, "Bob, I want you to get with the other PM shops in this PEO [program executive office] and collect their lessons learned on everything from requirements determination to source selection. Package the lessons learned in such a way that we can distribute this information to our staff. Okay, thanks again everyone; have a good day, and let's get out there."

As Bob walked out the door, he only thought that he was busy enough with his other responsibilities. Now, he had to figure out how he was going to go about capturing lessons learned.

The above is a fictional account, but if Bob were a real Deputy Program Manager, he would be reinventing the wheel himself trying to go out and collect lessons learned.

The Army Acquisition Corps (AAC) leadership recognized some time ago that it did not have the benefit of a truly centralized and accessible repository for acquisition lessons learned. The great news is that all that has now changed! The AAC has partnered with the Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL) to provide this opportunity to the acquisition community. People like Bob will now be able to access a database to retrieve the information they need.

## History Of CALL

CALL was founded in 1985 to capture relevant lessons learned from the National Training Center to benefit the total Army. CALL's analysis role grew in the late 1980s with the expansion of the Combat Training Center (CTC) Program; and with the establishment of the Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Chaffee, AR (now at Fort Polk, LA); the Combat Maneuver Training Center at Hohenfels, Germany (for U.S. Army, Europe forces); and the Battle Command Training Program at Fort Leavenworth, KS.

In 1989, as a result of Operation Just Cause, CALL began the Wartime Lessons Learned Program to capture and disseminate lessons learned from contingency operations. During Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, CALL undertook a test-bed automated archiving effort in support of Gulf War lessons learned. Building on these efforts, the Commander of the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command directed the Combined Arms Center (CAC) History Office and the Fort Leavenworth Directorate of Information Management to establish the Automated Historical Archives System for the electronic archiving and Army-wide dissemination of historical and lessons-learned documents from the Gulf War.

In 1994, the CAC Commander recast the CAC History Office as the Army Knowledge Network (AKN)

Directorate to meet the expanding mission of capturing the Army's record of contingency and CTC collective training operations. Then, in April 1996, the CAC Commander merged the AKN and CALL to focus collection, archiving, and analysis efforts on ensuring the Army receives timely and relevant feedback required for victory in the information age. In conjunction with a federal information technology test bed sponsored by the National Media Laboratory, CALL expanded its automation capabilities to include the capture, archiving, and digital dissemination of photo, video, and audio media to allow the Army to profit from the full spectrum of multimedia information.

On Oct. 16, 2000, the first AAC officer reported for duty at the CALL. His mission is to assist the Army acquisition community in increasing its knowledge and ability to accomplish its mission the first time and to capture acquisition lessons learned. This acquisition cell at CALL will provide successful lessons as templates for future actions and identify unsuccessful lessons as a way to avoid problems.

The AAC is completely committed to this program. It has established one military Officer Distribution Plan-supported position and one Department of the Army civilian position at the CALL. These individuals are assigned to the CALL, but remain in the Army Acquisition Executive Support Agency Table of Distribution and Allowances. The Acquisition Career Management Office (ACMO) is the proponent office assigned to this program by the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics and Technology. The ACMO is responsible for providing funding and administrative guidance to the CALL acquisition cell. The partnership between the AAC and the CALL, and CALL's 15-year experience as an organization focused on capturing lessons learned from training centers and actual operations, provides a truly beneficial capability to the AAC and the Army.

## CALL Today

This brings us up-to-date with the establishment of the CALL acquisition
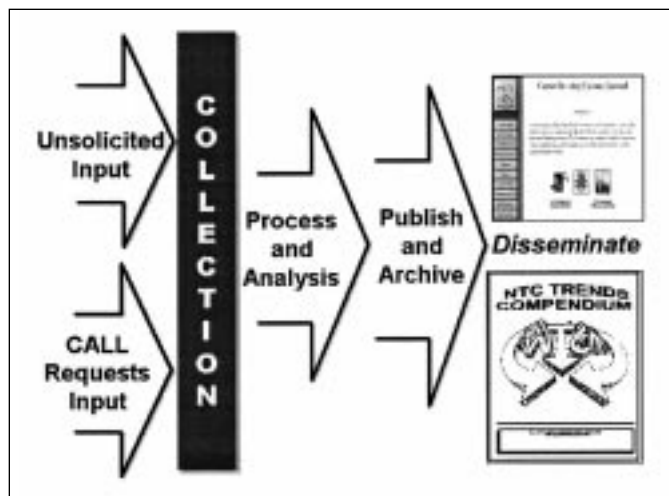


*Passive collection process*

cell. The cell has two immediate goals: the collection of lessons learned and the collection of academic research products. In the area of lessons learned, the cell is working to collect historical lessons learned thorough passive and active processes.

## Passive Process

Through a passive process, lessons learned are gathered from regularly planned events such as after action reviews, end-of-tour reports, or trigger events within the PEO/PM business area, or by unsolicited input through CALL's Web interface or other submission formats.

## Active Process

Articles, documents, and observations submitted through this process are reviewed, edited, and published using set procedures established by CALL. This process includes making sure that the submission meets the "so what" sanity check as well as presents lessons learned without undue emphasis on the organization or specific individuals.

An active collection always begins with a request for a focused Combined Arms Assessment Team (CAAT) to collect observations on a specific process or event. All CAAT taskings are requested by the ACMO in coordination with various Army acquisition organizations. Once approved and funded, a tasking is assigned to the acquisition cell within CALL by the ACMO for coordination, monitoring, and execution.

The AAC is already planning the first active lessons-learned collection
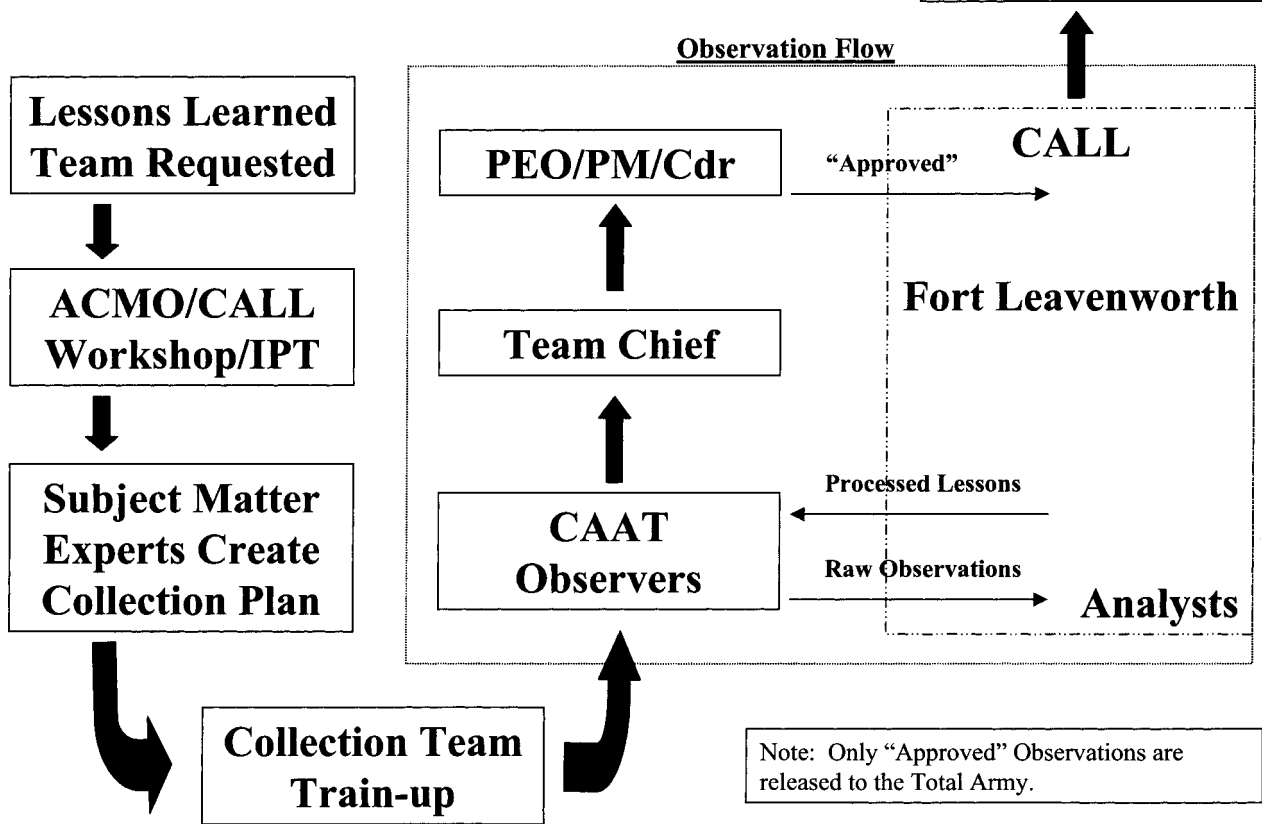
mission. This effort will focus on the acquisition processes associated with the development of the Brigade Combat Team (BCT). Phase 1 of this collection will include all activities between requirements determination and contract award. Other phases encompassing the remainder of the acquisition life-cycle model are planned. To accommodate this new mission, CALL is actively modifying its current lessons learned database software to include AAC tasks that fall under the acquisition life-cycle model.

In December 2000, CALL presided over the first BCT workshop/integrated product team (IPT) to identify topic areas that would most likely provide lessons learned. The IPT identified the subject matter expert (SME) requirements necessary to perform these collection efforts during Phase 1. Based on these requirements, the ACMO submitted tasking letters to various acquisition organizations requesting SMEs.

## Collecting Academic Research

The second immediate goal of the CALL acquisition cell is the collection and publication of academic research papers and products. The AAC sends many of its members to advanced civil schooling and can benefit from collecting and publishing the products of their work. To that end, the CALL acquisition cell operates and maintains a Web server that will eventually house these products. The AAC is currently working with several academic institutions (e.g., the Army War College, University of Texas-Austin, and the Naval Postgraduate School) to

## Active Collection Process

**Lessons Learned Team Requested**

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**ACMO/CALL Workshop/IPT**

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**Subject Matter Experts Create Collection Plan**

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**Collection Team Train-up**

**Total Army**

Observation Flow

**PEO/PM/Cdr** → "Approved" **CALL**

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**Team Chief**

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**CAAT Observers**

Processed Lessons ←

Raw Observations →

**Fort Leavenworth**

**Analysts**

Note: Only "Approved" Observations are released to the Total Army.

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have them submit completed academic research reports to CALL. CALL will make the full report downloadable in PDF format and the executive summary available online and searchable.

What is available right now? The CALL database is online and available for searching at **http://call.army.mil**. AAC members can use the CALL Web site as a source to enhance the Army's knowledge base.

What does CALL need from you? The acquisition cell is operational and ready to accept your products. Send the following:

• Best examples of a Mission Needs Statement; Operational Requirements Document; an Acquisition Strategy Baseline; or any other acquisition-related management document that can serve as a model to others given the same challenge;

• Copies of end-of-tour reports from previous project/program management offices;

• Copies of after action reports that are stored in your organizational library; and

• Good and bad lessons learned.

As philosopher George Santayana said, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." Accept the challenge to provide lessons to our future AAC community and don't make them relearn a lesson already accomplished.

If you would like to contact CALL, submit either an article on AAC lessons learned or a life-cycle document, or if you need help finding something on the CALL Web site, call MAJ Dan Clemons at (913) 684-9582, DSN 552-9582, or e-mail him at **call@leavenworth.army.mil**. You can mail hard-copy correspondence to Center for Army Lessons Learned, Lessons Learned Division, Actual Operations Branch, 10 Meade Avenue, Bldg 50, Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027.

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